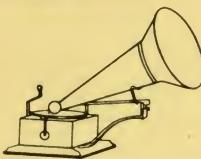


# Hillandale

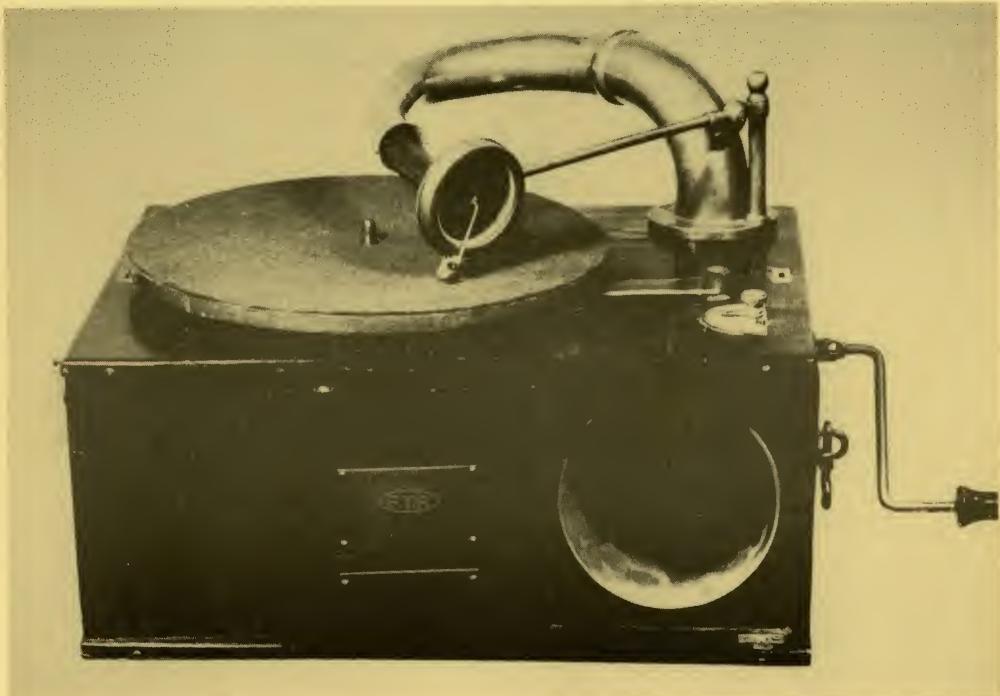


Journal of the  
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Phonograph and  
Gramophone Society

THE HILLANDALE NEWS

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On this month's front cover we show a portable gramophone marketed by Ediswan, a company normally associated with electrical goods. Known as the 'Attache' model, it came in an ebonised oak case, and had a telescopic tone-arm like that of the Primaphone - perhaps Primaphone arms were being used up.

ABOVE is a Walshaw 2/4 minute stylus bar, in which the two styli are mounted in a revolving head at the end of the bar, with a small lever (arrowed) to turn it over - just like the head of a 1950s record-player. On page 94, we show Walshaw's Variol attachment for Gems. Can anyone explain exactly how this works?



# Opera on Early Sound Film

G.W.Taylor

It is well known that since the very beginning of the cinema, films were not shown without some form of musical accompaniment, and attempts were made to combine film and recorded sound. Although the culmination of this process was the successful Vitaphone sound-on-disc system of the late 1920s, and the appearance of the first successful sound-on-film productions from 1923 on, long before this, we find the pioneers attempting to synchronise acoustic recordings and projected film. Dozens, of films synchronised (approximately!) with cylinders or discs were made, particularly in the period up to the First World War. The purpose of this article is to consider one group of these pioneering efforts, the sound films of opera. The table on the next page lists such films as I have compiled so far from various sources.

The list shows twenty-three named films, but only thirteen operas: 5 Faust, three each of Carmen, Pagliacci and Trovatore, and one each of Boheme, Don Juan, Falstaff, Lakme, Lucia di Lammermoor, Martha, Mignon, Romeo et Juliette and Tales of Hoffmann. Of these films, ten are British, nine American and four French, but this may reflect the limits of my research. Generally speaking, these experiments in sound belong to the early days even of the silent cinema, particularly in Britain, with its tradition of the music halls. I don't propose to go into technical details of projection and sound synchronisation (although that would be interesting - any volunteers?), but I shall briefly describe each group of films by country.

First the British, which represents nearly half the total. The ten entries were produced by Gaumont, Hepworth, Animatophone Syndicate and the Warwick Trading Company. Gaumont's efforts date from 1906 and 1907. They start off with the serenade (Mephistopholes, Act 4?) from Faust, but follow this up with the 'complete opera, 22 songs' in 1907. In the 1908 Lakme, the aria is identified as 'Les Stances' - possibly Lakme's Act 1 aria, Prayer to Durga, which, with the accompanying priests and worshippers, could be visually effective. Also in 1906, Gaumont produced the last act 'Home to our Mountains and the 'Miserere' from Trovatore in two films. As with Faust, 1907 ambitions are set rather high with a Carmen that features 'several songs'. Adequate sound amplification was achieved by Gaumont by use of the Parsons Auxetophone compressed air amplifier, which is well described by George Frow (Hillandale 57, p. 155, 1970). The Auxetophone was recently demonstrated in a television film on Parsons, recreating the 1906 test of amplifying a single double bass in a large hall - the result was most impressive. Were the Gaumont records especially made for the films, or did they use (possibly special pressings of) commercially released recordings? (Until the advent of Vitaphone, records and films were made separately, generally speaking.)

The Animatophone Syndicate used specially made records for their films of Faust and Trovatore, both issued in the summer of 1910. Details of these records and films are entertainingly described by Frank Andrews in the article already cited. The arias were apparently sung in English. I have failed to identify the singers listed by Frank - none is in the 1915 Who's Who in Music. Again, the Auxetophone was apparently used, and synchronisation between film and disc was (supposed to be) achieved by the projectionist watching a small pointer on the Animatophone machine and 'regulating the speed of (pro-

OPERA SOUND FILMS BEFORE VITAPHONE

<i>Title</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Maker</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Ref.</i>
La Boheme	1914	?	Commercial Biophone	USA	L
Carmen	1907	several songs	Gaumont Chronophone	UK	B
Carmen	1909	Toreador Song	Warwick Cinephone	UK	B
Carmen	1915	?	Commercial Biophone	USA	L
Don Juan	1900	?	Clement-Maurice	France	T
Falstaff	1900	?	Clement-Maurice	France	T
Faust	1906	Serenade	Gaumont Chronophone	UK	B
Faust	1907	'complete'	Gaumont Chronophone	UK	B
Faust	1910	several songs	Animatophone	UK	B/A
Faust	1911	?	Hepworth Vivaphone	UK	B
Faust	1914	'scene'	Commercial Biophone	USA	L
Lakme	1906	Les Stances	Gaumont Chronophone	UK	B
Lucia di Lammermoor	1911	Sextette	Edison Cinephonographe	USA	T
Martha	1909	?	Lumiere	France	L
Mignon	1915	?	Commercial Biophone	USA	L
Pagliacci	1913	3 reels	Vi-T-Phone	USA	L
Pagliacci	1915	?	Commercial Biophone	USA	L
Pagliacci	1921	On with the Motley	Webb	USA	T
Romeo et Juliette	1900	aria	Clement-Maurice	France	G/E/T
Tales of Hoffmann	1915	?	Commercial Biophone	USA	L
Trovatore	1906	Home to our Mountains	Gaumont Chronophone	UK	B
Trovatore	1906	Miserere	Gaumont Chronophone	UK	B
Trovatore	1910	several songs	Animatophone	UK	B/A
Unknown operetta	1896/7	?	Messter?	Germany	G

The sources cited in the last column are as follows:

B = The British Film Catalogue 1895-1970, by D.Gifford: David & Charles, 1973.  
Purports to list all British fictional films.

L = Four Aspects of the Film, by J.L. Limbacher: Brussel & Brussel 1968.  
Development of 3-D, colour, sound and widescreen films.

T = The Birth of the Talkies, by H.M. Geduld: Indiana University Press 1975

A = Article on Animatophone by Frank Andrews, Hillandale 109, 1979. Details of  
the records accompanying the 1910 Animatophone film of Il Trovatore.

G = The Guinness Book of Recorded Sound, by R. & C. Dearling, with Brian Rust:  
Guinness 1984. To be taken with a pinch of salt!

E = Sarah Berhardt, by W. Emboden, Studio Vista 1974.

jector) turning accordingly'. Not surprisingly, there were complaints about synchronisation, arising partly from the lack of skill (or attention) by the projectionist and partly from the film and records not corresponding, particularly in the case of *Trovatore*. There were eight single-sided discs accompanying *Trovatore*. Assuming these were twelve-inch records, their playing time would correspond almost exactly with two reels of film - quite an ambitious effort for 1910.

The Warwick Trading Company's Cinephone film of the Toreador Song from *Carmen* was the only operatic release in the extensive series of Cinephone films made in these years, mainly of popular songs.

Hepworth was one of the major film-makers of the period, and his product was generally noted for its artistic quality. Just before the war, the studio was turned over to making sound films once a week (one source says Fridays) and Gifford lists quite a number of Vivaphone films (two a week for three or four years, recalls Hepworth in 'Came the Dawn', Collins 1951). The film-making was synchronised to the previously made (normal commercial?) records, the actors mouthing the words of the famous stars of the music hall on record. The 1911 *Faust* seems to be the only operatic. It is not clear from Gifford exactly how long the film was, but the entry seems to suggest 15 minutes. In that case, several records must have been used during the shooting and exhibition of one reel of film. Hepworth describes film and record synchronisation of the day. He implies that commercial gramophone records were used, and these were played through several times to the actors who were to take part in the film. He then describes a rival's Cinephone synchronisation procedure, where a moving pointer on the playback gramophone was kept in step with a similar pointer on a gramophone photographed as part of the scene on the film - very approximate obviously, and if the synchronisation got out, everyone in the audience knew why, since the playback gramophone was up there by its screen partner! Hepworth designed an electrical system, and claimed that synchronisation was good to  $1/8$  second - in the hands of a skilled operator. The projectionist still had to obey the electrical signal and adjust projector speed - this was manual and, of course, if the programme boy did not start the needle on the record at the right point, all was lost. The Vivaphone system was sold or leased in complete sets consisting of synchroniser, gramophone attachment, projector handle, coil of wire, and four-volt battery - all very do-it-yourself and informal. Those were the days.

Concerning the American operatic films, titles and makers are listed by Limbacher but little is said about the films or their synchronised records. Geduld, in describing several American sound/film systems, says that an exhibition of the Synchroscope in Indiana in 1908 included a sound film of Caruso. Caruso also appeared in a 1911 Edison film of the sextette from *Lucia*; the ensemble also included the famous French bass Pol Plancon (1854-1914). The Cinephonograph system was not a success, and Edison did some more development work, mainly, it appears, on increasing the sensitivity of recording. The re-vamped process came out in 1913 as the Kinetophone (shades of the 1895 peep-show). Filming and record making were simultaneous and, according to the account in Geduld's book recording was on soft wax cylinders nearly a foot long and four or five inches in diameter. For more details of this and the resulting Blue Amberol-type processed cylinders, see John Carreck's letter elsewhere in this issue.

Again, Kinetophone was not a commercial success, and Edison washed his hands of sound films.

The Vi-T-Phone Pagliacci ran to three reels - almost feature-length for the day. The Vi-T-Phone system (no connection with the later Vitaphone) seems to have been quite

successful for a limited period, as in 1913 they had 100 American-made singing and talking subjects ready, and were releasing six subjects every week.

The major producer, at least of operatic films, seems to have been Commercial Biophone, who released six films in the 1914-1915 period. Presumably these were only short, such as filmed arias.

About 1921, George Regester Webb of Baltimore demonstrated a disc system in Westminster Cathedral Hall, of the voice of Caruso (singing On with the Motley) synchronised with the projected image another 'singer'. The record may well have been one of Caruso's Victor releases, but the 'illusion was complete and unusually effective', according to the Times correspondent.

It has been seen that Caruso not only appeared in two silent films (in 1918) but also in at least two sound films (1908 and 1911) and may also have been involved with the 1921 film. More details on the making of these films, particularly the synchronised ones, would be very interesting.

While on the American films, mention must be made of Lubin's 1904 film called 'The Bold Bank Robbery'. You had to pay for two Victor Monarch records, but he threw in a Victor talking machine ('including horn and sounding box') free. (A Million and One Nights, by T.Ramsaye, Simon & Schuster 1926).

Back in France, the home of the first commercially successful film projection, we find film makers early turning to sound. Films synchronised with cylinders were especially made for the Paris Exposition of 1900 by the photographer-showman Clement Maurice Gratioulet, who preferred to be known as Clement-Maurice. The sound was provided by Henri Lioret's Lioretgraphe, whose recording and amplification qualities were said to be superior to Edison's phonograph (Geduld p. 52). The projectionist listened to the phonograph through a telephone line, and adjusted the speed of his hand-cranked projector to maintain synchronisation. The most famous film is the duel scene from Hamlet, with Sarah Bernhardt, but opera also got a look-in. The tenor Emile Cossira (1854-1923) sang an aria from Gounod's Romeo et Juliette. This information comes from a poster advertising the films reproduced in 'The Archaeology of the Cinema' by C.W.Ceram. Geduld says that the celebrated baritone Victor Maurel (1848-1923) sang arias from Falstaff and Don Juan (presumably Mozart's opera, in which case the aria could have been the famous Serenade?). Maurel's films are not mentioned on the poster in Ceram's book, but there seem to have been several different shows.

Ceram also reproduces a poster for the Biophonograph, which seems to date from around the turn of the century. Among other delights, the company proclaims at least the intention of producing operatic sound films, and Verdi's face is prominent among those worthies apparently witnessing the 'revolution scientifique'. Did they indeed produce any operatics?

Limbacher says that Lumiere issued a sound version of Martha in 1909. Other sources say that Lumiere himself stopped making films soon after 1900 - he was a scientist, not a showman.

Germany's only contribution (that I have found) dates from the dawn, 1896 or early 1897, when Fritzi Massary (soprano, 1882-1969) and Giampetro (actor, ? - ?) filmed scenes from an unknown operetta, the sound being synchronised records, probably cylinders. This information comes from the Guinness Book of Recorded Sound. Well, they may be

right; but Fritzi was only 14 or 15 at the time and, according to Kutsch and Riemens, began her celebrated career as a singer in operetta only in 1902. (Messter made a dialogue film (sound-on-disc) of Giampetro about 1908, when the actor was with the Metropol Theatre.)

Finally, why were these films made? What audience were they for? In the very early days, anything might be tried, but by 1906, say, the cinema in Europe and America had settled into a pattern it would follow for many years, with short films made for rather unsophisticated audiences and in Britain, the audience which had been the mainstay of the nineteenth century music hall. Opera and opera singers were held in greater esteem in Edwardian times than now, perhaps, but what opera-goer of the time would have been satisfied with an acoustic recording of an aria more-or-less, often less, synchronised with the picture on the screen of the average small cinema of the day? This must be one reason why these attempts at combining record and film faded away with the rise of the feature film, and the consequent attraction of a more sophisticated cinema audience.

#### Appendix: Other Film Sources Considered

USA. Until 1912, films could be copyrighted in America by depositing a paper print in the Library of Congress, and this included imported films. Not every film was copyrighted of course, but many were, and the paper prints have been listed and described in 'Motion Pictures from the Library of Congress Paper Print Collection, 1884-1912', by K.R.Niver, University of California 1967. There is no information as to whether the original film was accompanied by a synchronised record - Lubin's film mentioned above is catalogued but the discs that accompanied it are not mentioned. In the event, I found no operatic films that I suspected might have had synchronised sound. For Germany, my main source was 'Screen Series: Germany', by F.Bucher, Zwemmer 1970. Nothing was found there. For France, miscellaneous reference books were consulted, including a complete filmography of George Melies, a likely contender - he did indeed make operatic films but not with synchronised sound. For the early Swedish cinema, where it is reported that experiments were made combining film and disc, no actual films were unearthed, the source being 'Screen Series: Swedish Cinema' by P.Cowie, Zwemmer 1970. The extensive areas of Danish and Italian cinema have not been examined; both countries had a thriving industry before the war with extensive export markets, and Cines (Italy) made a silent of Lucrezia Borgia after 1909.

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### To the Editor

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Dear Christopher,

Like many fellow members I have, for more years than I care to reflect, found the phonographic hobby to be a progressive disease, absorbing an ever greater proportion of my time. I find the sheer range and variety of interest within one hobby truly amazing, there are the technical, scientific, mechanical, historical, and, dare I say it, the vast range of artistic interest. The last aspect seldom gains mention and several others rarely make print in a magazine which is finding difficulty in page filling.

If a passing spaceman from a distant galaxy were to read the last ten years' issues of Hillendale he could not be criticised for believing that a record is an article of cylindrical or disc form, detailing the record company, matrix number and just occasionally mention of artist and title.

Whatever aspect of this hobby holds the member it must be acknowledged that the artistry on record is central to all things, yet I cannot recall a discography within our columns and it is noted that the centenary of John McCormack's birth was only recalled as an afterthought. If the artistry on record is central, the interest in the machinery used to play the records must run second, and yet we have only rarely had articles on unusual phonographs and gramophones. There must be fertile ground in the amazing range of machines of continental origin or made of such components, or closer to home, the maniacal HMV model numbering system. (But see H&D, April 1982 - Ed.)

So much potential, and yet we see you in the less than edifying position of having to appeal for copy. The effect of such appeals on new members can easily be judged. Not of course that we are short of experts because I note that many members contribute to other magazines and I wonder whether some aspect of the Society or the magazine is seen as a tacit deterrent to would-be contributors. Whatever the reason it is undeniable that the magazine is attracting neither the range nor quality of interest and I intend no insult when I say I regard Hillandale as neat but dull.

I suppose that about one in ten of U.K. members attend regional group meetings; the other ninety per cent presumably see the Society as little more than a magazine subscription and I think we should be considering ways to draw more members into some form of activity. One of the problems I encounter from contact with a good number of former and non-active members is that their particular interest isn't covered or there are no others with their particular interest in the vicinity. It seems to me some attempt should be made to encourage the formation of interest groups operating within the Society. Such groups could advance the particular aspect of the hobby but could also provide good copy in the publication of group reports and results or appeals for research etc.

I believe we already have the nuclei of several such groups with Jim Goodall and several others interested in acoustic sound reproduction, the Dawson-ites, etc.

A further advantage from the formation of such groups could be group displays at Phonofairs, which have tended to become stereotyped with their silent displays of acoustic machines and the like. The stereotype has worn somewhat thin, as have the attendances.

1984 is yet another 'anniversary' for the Society and it will be 65 years old. At 65, Britons are regarded as being of no further use and in their dotage (unless they are Cabinet Ministers, of course), and put out to grass. To many, however, such an age is a new beginning and I suggest the Society and magazine might look to the future in that way.

Liverpool

Sincerely, Barry Williamson.

---

"On the whole, we are a modest lot." (H&D June 1984, pp 45-6)

No, Mr. Proudfoot. I do not think so. An 'ordinary' person - to use your term - would not be capable, as you are, of the snide, calculated put-down.

My letter was written in good faith, albeit naively as I can see now: I failed to understand that rather than accept my letter for its good intentions you would seize upon it, instead, as an occasion for derisive editorial comments.

Even so, I appear to have shaken loose from you one statement clear enough: it is

that the HILLANDALE NEWS is written by and for a tight little in-group of British collectors and all others, be they - to use your example - 'a minor J. Paul Getty' (who would, of course, be an American) or myself (likewise and American) are distinctly unwelcome.

Well, so be it. I will let my present subscription to your magazine run its course and that will be the end of it. A pity...

Massachusetts

Lawrence Goodwin

Dear Mr. Proudfoot,

As a response to your request for information on readers' interests, I made a survey of some recent issues. It is not exhaustive; it obviously is a personal choice, that is the whole point. It ignores Regional Roundup and similar 'compulsory' matter and some parts of a series can be seen as more interesting than others. As the whole thing has an element of arbitrariness, I have limited it to three categories - Interesting, Middling and Uninteresting.

Conclusions: of greatest interest are well-researched articles on the history of a company, an artist or technical matters. Of least interest are cartoons, articles on technical matters badly put together, often full of errors or half-understood material, history/reminiscence of 'How I Started Record Collecting'.

East Barnet

Eliot B. Levin

*The very gratifying response to my appeals for copy mean that I am now having to hold over much material for the next issue, and do not have space to print Mr. Levin's chart. That is a pity in one way, because it makes interesting reading, but it may also be a good omission because many contributions in Mr. Levin's 'uninteresting' category are, I happen to know, popular with other readers and I would hate to discourage their authors from further efforts on our behalf. Because of the lack of space, and because I want to leave room for a few illustrations, that is all you are getting from me in this issue. Hurrah! - Ed.*

Dear Christopher,

Well, I for one care when the magazine comes out, I always enjoy it be it late or early and you do a good job and do keep it up!

I'd like to write but then I am not all that wise in gramophone matters and I did enjoy Ted Cunningham's article on Putting the Record Straight. I've never seen a 'flower pot' either but often still hear of them. Did you ever try this: if you need to fake ebony take an old 78, play it for the last time and then break it into small pieces. Put them into a jam jar and cover with methylated spirits. Allow to stand for perhaps five or six days, then you have a liquid which is quite unlike paint, and leaves the grain of the wood showing.

Going back to articles, I might suggest items which have ben discovered recently and are unusual. Why not little bits on the old disc and cylinder artists? I've seen a few in back numbers from the 1960s. I'm sure members could supply information for us newcomers. Co. Wexford

Michael Hegarty

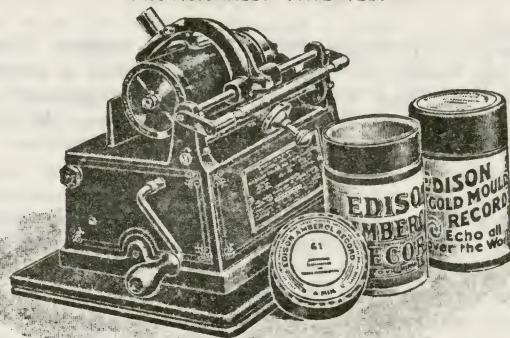
# Gems Up-to-date.

The "VARIOL" Combination Attachment,

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Handy...  
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To reproduce the new Amberol records it is only necessary to change the sapphire bar. You can easily do this by the Varioil method inside ten seconds. There is no difficulty whatever.

Full instructions with each set for easy fixing. The gear is changed by simply tightening or loosening a finger-nut. Your machine will run the records perfectly. Should you doubt, send 15/0, and by return post you will receive a set carefully tested, all ready for immediate use **on approval**.

The latest Amberol records are excellent, and you should fit your machine up to use them, along with those you already have. Be up-to-date.

## VERY NUMEROUS TESTIMONIALS LAST WEEK.

January 31st.

I have fitted "Varioil to Gem, and must congratulate you on it being a perfect success.

S. S.

February 8th, 1909.

Received quite safely. I have tested it with Model C Reproducer, and am delighted with results.

E. I. S.

February 8th, 1909.

I am pleased to inform you that I am so satisfied with the "Varioil" attachment that I shall retain the one sent (on approval). You seem to have thought out everything for proper working, and it is simple to operate.

C. A. B.

February 10th.

I have parted with the three sets you sent as sample, I find them easy to fix, and good results from same. Please send on half doz. more sets.

H. D.

February 12th.

I enclose P.O. for attachment. I fitted it very easily to Gem, and it plays "Amberol" records very well indeed. I congratulate you on the make and finish of the attachment, which I consider excellent.

G. G.

*When properly adjusted, the Gem Phonograph will, with this Attachment, reproduce over four inches of record, that is from end to end of any Amberol Record.*

If you have not got a Phonograph let me send you a new Gem already fitted to use, either Ordinary or Amberol records, with perfect results. "Home" and "Triumph" patterns almost ready.

Price complete, with Horn, &c., £3 10s. 6d. Large stock of Amberol Records, 1/6 each.

Foreign Agents required.

Trade supplied.

**ARTHUR WALSHAW, OTLEY, YORKS.**

Owing to my employer's unreasonable insistence that I should attend to mundane things like work, the more important things of life have been neglected recently. Hence the Regional reports have almost become time expired! My apologies to Branch reporters.

It is often implied in the Chilterns reports that meetings are unforgettable occasions which is a good thing as the first to be reported was held in August 1982! At Mike Appleton's the visitors were treated to a very interesting afternoon of entertainment in bright sunny weather. The first hour was spent in Mike's museum which must now house the most comprehensive Edison collection this side of the Atlantic. The range of machines show the complete development of the Edison Phonograph from beginning to demise, supplemented with ample advertising literature and catalogues. Moreover, Mike has plenty of recorded material to use on the various machines such as Edison's voice on a diamond disc, urging his dealers to sell more machines. The whole afternoon could have been spent in the museum, but the visitors were soon whisked off into the lounge to watch a television documentary on the life of Edison. The show included of course a section on the Phonograph, but it also brought home the incredible range of Edison's activities during his life. A most enjoyable afternoon made complete by the excellent catering provided by Mike's good lady, Lulu.

In February, the group went to Reading to meet Mike Juniper who boasts a great enthusiasm for recorded history. The afternoon began with a well researched quiz. Mike played a series of records on machinery concealed behind a curtain and contestants had to decide on the record company, date recorded, artists, method of recording and reproduction. The maximum points achieved was 8 out of a possible 36 with the prize going to Len Watts. It goes to show how uneducated (sic) they are at the Chilterns, but I wonder how other Branches might fare. After a suitable interval featuring more and more food an immaculate Apollo gramophone with an enormous oversize motor capable of playing about six records without rewind was presented for inspection. One especially interesting feature was its twelve panel wooden horn. This was followed by a rendition from one of Jim Balchin's almost completed roll playing organs; each one he makes incorporates improvements making it sound even better than the last. Also heard was a Triola zither which plays the main theme using a paper roll while the operator adds the accompanying chords by hand. A fascinating machine!

There have been two reported meetings of the Midlands Branch. In the first held in March, the attendance was disappointingly low for a very pleasing presentation by Phil Bennett entitled "Jazz not on 78". Phil had prepared a well researched tape of jazz items recorded in the vintage years of 1928 to 1934 which were never actually issued on 78s but have subsequently appeared on microgroove in recent years. In some instances the recordings were unissued; in others the items were alternative "takes" of records which had been issued at the time.

At the second meeting held in July, the main part of the evening was split into two. First, Gerry Burton presented an unusual programme by giving a fascinating account of how he became a collector of things gramophonic and had brought along an impressive display of some of his prize possessions, starting with his very first - an HMV 101 portable. Four of his "crested china" gramophones from the 1920s included the very rare long upright and vertical upright examples which are ironically much harder to find than the already

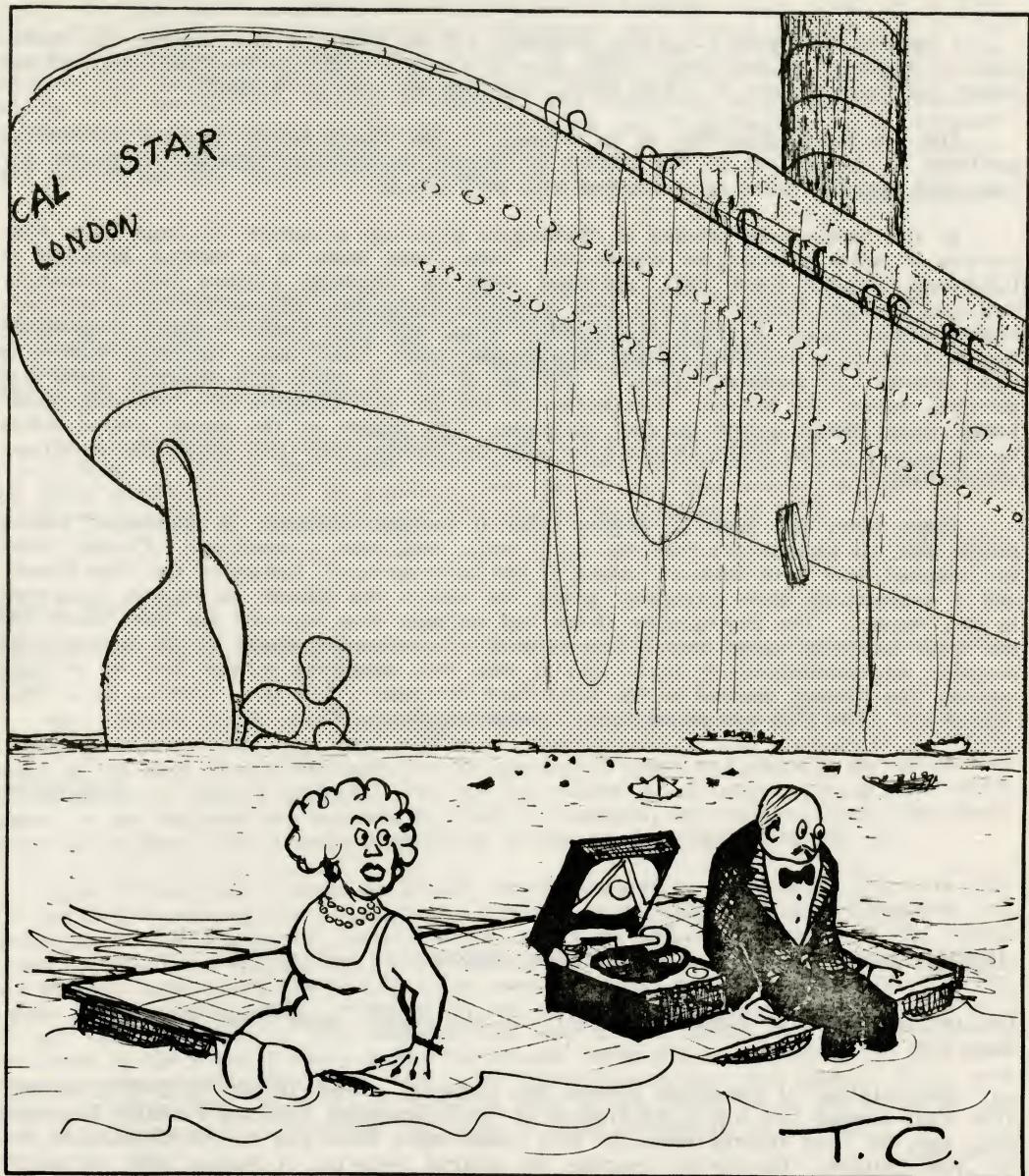
scarce norn type. He also showed examples from his collection of needle tins and record cleaning pads and one of his most valuable records - a 10" Berliner which as a type had such a short life. Gerry almost brought tears to the eye when he recounted how he was forced to sell his Zonophone "Cecil" horn machine in order to acquire his superb Columbia brass horned machine, but as we all know: you can't win them all! The second offering was from Gerry Lee and consisted of a delightful mixture of music and humorous stories. John McCormack was of course the subject - particularly appropriate in the centenary year. Gerry explained that he thought the older members present might appreciate the music while the younger element might prefer his jokes! In the event all present enjoyed both.

The highlight of the Midland Branch's calendar was the annual phonofair held in August at Oldbury which provides an ideal venue. It is close to the M5, with plenty of parking space, refreshment facilities, a large hall to set up trading stalls and ancillary rooms for less frenetic activities. This year the event started earlier than usual and must have caught some people by surprise when they arrived to find a few traders had already departed. The familiar figures of Dave Roberts and Len Watts operated the Society Bookstall and the trading stalls as usual provided a very satisfying browse and goodies changed hands throughout the day.

Howard Hope arrived with armfuls of highly desirable exotica and we thought that it was going to be the sale of the Century. In the event nothing was for sale and Howard had brought some of his collection for the general education and delight of the multitude. And how well that function was fulfilled! Howard described the important facets of each machine and related little anecdotes about their history and acquisition. There was a coin operated Dog model, a coin operated Puck(!), a magnificent 5in mandrel Columbia GC and many others of similar calibre. I particularly liked the story of a superb Lioret which was given as a parting gift to a retiring servant of the Roseberry family.(Lord Roseberry was Prime Minister in the mid 1890s and the Lioret could have been his own property.) Anyway, he, the servant not Lord Roseberry, promptly sold it to a local motor dealer who subsequently had great difficulty in getting rid of it and had to suffer much chafing by his friends for letting his heart rule his pocket so to speak. Fortunately Howard arrived on a white charger to relieve of his worry. The talk was much appreciated, giving us a the opportunity of seeing at close quarters machines which are more often found in museums with the added bonus of an amusing and informative chat. Many thanks Howard!

The regular Concours event attracted a number of high quality entries with Fred Perks winning the gramophone prize with a rather splendid Edison Bell Discaphone internal horn machine. His well deserved win shows that rare or historic machines are not a prerequisite for success. The phonograph prize was won by some hanger on with a restored Home. It was nice to see our President George Frow and Mrs. Frow there. George presented the prizes and thanked all the Midland members who had worked so hard to make the event so successful. A sentiment echoed by us all.

This has been an extended report and, assuming the Editor has room for it will bring the Roundup more or less up to date. The Hereford Branch doings must be held for the next issue, but there is just enough room to record an appreciation to Don Watson. Don has been the Secretary of the Hereford branch for many years and during that time has been tireless in his efforts for the members. However he now finds the pressure of business incompatible with the job of Secretary and Laurie Wilson has taken over. All in the Hereford branch offer their thanks for a job well done.



At least my first husband would have salvaged something useful, like the cocktail trolley

## A COMPACT DISC IN 1885

I imagine that even C.L.P.G.S. members will be aware of the compact disc which plays by means of a laser beam. Well, here is a disc of 1885 that was both recorded and played back with the aid of a light beam - and this one actually worked!

The process is described in an article by the sound picture pioneer E.W.Kellogg published in the journal of the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers for June 1955, and the following is adapted from that article.

In the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C. are a number of large glass discs carrying a spiral photographic soundtrack. These were made by a method described in U.S.Patent 341,213 (filed 1885, published 1886) to Alexander Graham Bell, Chichester Bell and Sumner Tainter. Light from a steady source was transmitted in a relatively narrow beam through a piece of stationary glass, and then further restricted by a slit just in front of a revolving circular photographic plate. Just above the place where the light entered the stationary glass, a tiny jet of ink (or other light-absorbing fluid) was directed across the surface. The nozzle of the jet was attached to a 'sounding board' (small plate) which picked up the vibrations. The jiggles of the nozzle caused waves in the stream of ink which flowed down over the surface, and these modulated the transmitted light.

Some years ago (that is, before 1955) it became desirable, in connection with a patent suit, to demonstrate that the spiral track really was a soundtrack. Contact prints (on celluloid film) were made of several of the more promising looking of the glass plates, and a reproducing beam arranged, giving the record the benefit of modern equipment in this respect. The photographic image had suffered from age and was very noisy, and the total recording lasted only a few seconds; the recording speed on the hand-cranked machine was determined by trial. But it was with something of the thrill of an antiquarian that Kellogg listened to the voice from the past. "This is ... I am ... in ... the... laboratory." The date was given, too, "... eighteen eight-...?"

G.W.Taylor.

## HAROLD WILDE AND THE NON-IDENTICAL TWINS

*Two replies to Colin Johnson's enquiry in the August issue about Zonophone - Twin Record No 79*

The original of these two versions was issued as a TWIN DOUBLE SIDED DISC RECORD. (The Twin Record Co. was a sub-division of the Gramophone Company's British Zonophone Co., and the Twin records were the first double-sided discs sold by the Gramophone Co. in Great Britain). The Society reprints the original Twin list of August 1908. Strangely, records were sold from this list without the serial number as shown; they had only the Record No. (the single-sided number), with a T prefix. (the contemporary Zonophones, all

single-sided, had Record Nos. prefixed with X).

In May 1911, the British Zonophone Co. Ltd. took over the catalogue of the Twin Record Co. Ltd. (both companies had acquired Limited Liability status after the original issue of No. 79). No further single-sided Zonophones were issued, but the bulk of the Zonophone catalogue was retained and pressed as Zonophone Record - The Twin. The repertoire was numbered into the serial number system of the old Twin catalogues. The existing Twin records were likewise re-labelled. The T-prefixed record numbers continued to appear only on former Twin records. New issues had X-prefixed numbers, continued from the previous Zonophone system. The CINCH record was introduced in September 1913 and the last new issues were in January 1916.

Frank Andrews

Mr. Colin Johnson raises some interesting points in his letter about the Harold Wilde Zonophones. Wilde made 915e/9149e on November 12th 1908, and remade both titles on ah15074e/ah15073e on February 23rd 1912. He remade them again on y19811e/y19807e on January 5th and 4th 1916. All three versions were given the single-face numbers T-2076 and T-2077 and the coupling number 79.

As to why Wilde remade his records, while he may not have been a 'top rate singer' a la Caruso, he was a man whose voice satisfied the record-buying public, judging by the large number of titles he produced over the years. Speculation, however, is not usually very productive, and I would not like mine to be mistaken for fact!

Alan Kelly

#### SIMPLE DATING?

*The same two correspondents also have something to offer on this topic. Alan Kelly first:*

Mr. Sulkin's letter asks for simple dating techniques and explanations of matrix numbering codes. Alas, the total number of matrices cut by the Gramophone Company alone in the days of the 78 r.p.m. record ran into millions and there is no simple way of describing so large a problem. Part of the trouble is, of course, that articles which appear in one magazine are not seen by readers of another, and readers do not keep themselves up to date. (The expense of being up to date is quite high, however!)

John Perkins and I wrote an article which appeared in the Record Collector (Vol 23 Nos 3-4) explaining the Gramophone Company matrix codes, including Zonophone and giving approximate dates. A further article in Vol 24 Nos. 11-12 dealt with the 'a/b/c' series of matrices recorded by Fred Gaisberg and provided a dating table by months, but to date each record individually would require a table about 50 pages long, and that for a simple matrix series. Whether or not these are still available as back issues I do not know. Readers of this magazine can find a table giving the year of recording for items in the e and f series in No. 133 (August 1983) and if the Editor can find room for it, a similar table dating the HO series might even appear this month! Those with access to these four issues should therefore have a fair indication of the origin of the bulk of Gramophone Co. recordings (and those of sister companies) up to 1921.

Alan Kelly

A book published many years ago, which may still be on the shelves of some public libraries, is Record Collecting, by Boris Semeonoff. This gives a rough guide to the dating of different makes of record sold in Britain. Various makes of record have been listed by catalogue series in the past by various individuals and publications, which often gave the release dates of the records mentioned, and there was a whole series of books by the Oakwood press called 'Voices of the Past'. This covered most Gramophone Co. issues in the celebrity repertoires and some of the popular repertoire, and there was one volume devoted to Columbia celebrity issues and one to Fonotipia. However all these are now out of print.

As far as I am aware there has never been any work published which gives a comprehensive account of the variously labelled records which were on sale in this country with guidance on how to date them.

Frank Andrews

*Frank also offers the following note for Mr. Stone, who asked in the last issue about an early Zonophone record:*

Zonophone No. 339 was made by the independent INTERNATIONAL ZONOPHONE COMPANY, of Berlin and New York. It was recorded in 1902, after April.

A.H.Gee was an Australian baritone, and made records before Dawson made his first (for Edison Bell). Joe Batten's Book mentions the recording of A.H.Gee (on Page 33) one day in September 1900, reputedly for the Musiphone Company. This was run by Dan Smoot, an American. He was one of the first of the Zonophone experts, but the date is too early for the International Zonophone discs.

## SYLVAPHONE

A correspondent has asked for information on a Sylvaphone table grand gramophone. It is said to have a Thorens motor, and the turntable and soundbox are also Swiss made.

I believe that Sylvaphone was the brand-name of machines sold through Co-Op. stores by the Co-operative Wholesale Society (C.W.S.). Like most 'own brand' makes, these gramophones were assembled from proprietary mechanical components, only the cabinet and horn possibly being made by the actual assembler. The latter could have been a factory owned by the C.W.S., or an independent firm under contract to them, or the machines could have been bought in ready made and simply branded with the Sylvaphone name. The fact that the main components are Swiss does not mean that the gramophone as a whole is Swiss; it could be, but is more likely to have been assembled in this country in the 1920s or early 1930s.

The fact that the turntable is marked Swiss Made is not surprising, as most motors were supplied complete with turntable (and brake and speed control). Thorens motors therefore naturally have Swiss turntables. It is quite likely that the soundbox is also by Thorens; although it may not have the name, it very likely has an anchor trade-mark upon it somewhere. - Ed.

## RECORDINGS MADE BY THE GRAMOPHONE COMPANY LIMITED 1912 - 1921

## Matrix Series prefixed HO

	10-inch	12-inch	
1912	20-255	130-371	371 sic
1913	256-792	377-541	377 sic
1914	793-1113	542-619	
1915	1114-2297	620-1402	
1916	2298-3376	1403-2422	
1917	3377-3883	2423-3027	
1918	3884-4543	3028-3538	
1919	4544-5488	3539-4208	
1920	5489-6018	4209-4689	
1921	6019-6093	4690-4737	

## Notes:

1 'HO' stands for Head Office, i.e. London, as place of recording.

2 The suffix in theory indicates which expert made each recording, but this applies only until about the middle of 1916.

3 Suffixes used are as follows:  
 b/c F.W.Gaisberg                            e/f W.C.Gaisberg  
 y/c Clarke                                    ab/ac Hancox  
 ae/af Pearse                                ah/ai Murtagh  
 ak/al Dillnutt                              exp Parnell

4 The letters may be reversed on early recordings; thus ab 21 ho is the same as Ho 21 ab.

5 Start and finish letters for the series are:  
 HO 20 ab 9 May 1912                    HO 130 ai May 1912 (week ending 16th)  
 HO 6093ae 17 Feb. 1921                HO 4737 af Feb. 16, 1921.

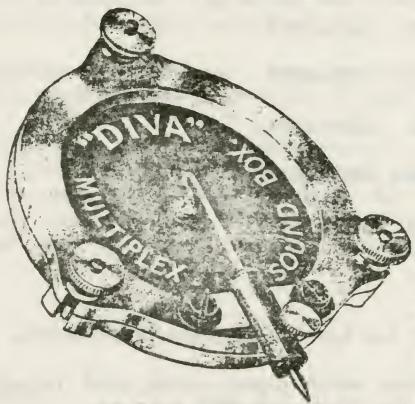
Alan Kelly

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## MORE ON MAGNETIC RECORDING

D.Gifford-Hull

Mr. Jansen's article on magnetic recording in June 1983 was very interesting, and covered a wide field. Hoping that the subject is not outside our sphere of interest, I would like to add a few notes.

During the war, I was concerned with equipment for intercepting enemy radio transmissions. We had wire recorders from 1943 onwards, for recording Morse and r.t. interceptions for later analysis by Intelligence. The model was known as the G.E.50, I believe, and it bore the 'Armour' label. We wondered if the pressed beef company had been coerced into making recorders as part of their war effort, but it seems that Armour was a research organisation. As I recall, the wire was almost as thin as a hair, and was transported across the head by the spools themselves, using no capstan. As the storage area of the spool was principally on the periphery, the speed constancy must have been adequate for Morse or voice, but not music. The instrument was little larger than a portable typewriter.

But the principle object of my letter concerns the German 'Tonschreiber', which was a most sophisticated tape recorder captured by the Allies during the Invasion of Europe. It was essentially a portable equipment (Model B, I believe), in three cases which stacked on top of each other. I had one working at the War Office for some time before it was sent to the Ministry of Supply for analysis. I wish I could recall if it was made by Telefunken, Siemens or Lorenz. It used oxide tape approximately  $\frac{3}{8}$ " wide on huge spools about 12" diameter. The playing speed was precisely controlled from 3.5 to 102 cm. per second, by means of a phonic motor (electric motor controlled from a variable frequency audio oscillator). This 30:1 ratio provided enough scope to play back slowly high speed Morse or teleprinter signals and mysterious telemetry transmissions etc., but of course the pitch would have been excessively reduced. So the outfit had a pitch restoring system. This consisted of a revolving head (for playback). There were in fact four heads built into the periphery of a wheel, which could be revolved at any chosen speed against the direction of the tape, so restoring the pitch. As a matter of fact it worked surprisingly well with speech, only marred by the slight 'wow' of the four-pole revolving head. One can imagine it must have been very useful for recording lengthy interrogations!

I had copious notes on this equipment until a couple of years ago, when I gave them away. The 'Tonschreiber' did not bear the name 'Magnetophon', but I presume it was the portable military version of this equipment; no doubt Mr. Jansen could comment on this.

I do recall that some electronics companies were singularly interested in this equipment after the War, and it subsequently struck me as strange that tape recorders did not emerge on the market sooner than they did, a point made by Mr. Jansen. My description of the 'Tonschreiber' is a bit vague after forty years, but if anyone has seen or used one, I would be pleased to hear from them.

Mr. Jansen also mentions that in 1949 the Dutch Radio Bulletin described the 'Wiramphone' as a wire recorder on which 78 r.p.m. records could also be played. Well, on February 6th, 1945 I filed a patent for a contrivance enabling an ordinary radiogram to play magnetic wire. An empty spool was placed on the turntable, drawing the wire past a head which was connected into the audio input; the attachment, with pay-off spool, was clipped to the side of the radiogram. It was never put into production, nor progressed

beyond the experimental stage.

Another device which was used in the wartime radio interception business was a film recorder, using 35mm. film (in the form of a long loop) upon which signals were recorded by cutting with a stylus (the same system had been used much earlier in the Hiller talking clock). We also used to connect a cathode ray tube to the output of a receiver and photograph with a cine camera. In this way the 'fingerprints' (i.e. sending style) of the operator could be identified and compared, or the actual transmitter, since each had identifiable characteristics on keying (i.e. H.T. voltage ripples and fluctuations). Such equipment is now useful in analysing damage on records and in observing resonances and the effect of filters.

When I read such Victorian phrases as 'timbre', 'fullness', 'roundness', 'brilliance' etc., of various claimed improvements in equipment or records, I wonder if they would be substantiated if subjected to such detailed and scientific analysis.

*Possibly not - but scientific analysis does not always make good advertising copy, and may be as meaningless to the average man in the street as those Victorian phrases are to the scientist - Ed.*

## A Crime Against Art

PURCHASE TAX ON RECORDS

by George Frow

It will be forty-four years this autumn since those of us in Great Britain have been able to buy records without having to pay out something for the Chancellor of the Exchequer at the same time. Firstly it was Purchase Tax, and that was superseded around thirteen years ago by Value Added Tax.

Purchase Tax was solely responsible for the embossed letters found in the recessed area of one side of E.M.I. 78 records, just near the centre hole, and pressed in the United Kingdom from the end of 1940. These were sometimes a T, sometimes a DT, TT or other combinations, and indicated to the retailer the amount of Purchase Tax he had paid on that record and recoverable from the customer. The Decca group usually printed these symbols on one of the labels, and did not use embossed lettering.

October 1940 was not a good time for this country. Her forces had been chased out of France at Dunkirk in the early summer, and since August London and other cities had been heavily bombed, and austerity was taking a grip. From October 21st Sir Kingsley Wood, Chancellor of the Exchequer, introduced Purchase Tax on so-called luxury items and these included gramophone records at 33½ per cent of the wholesale price.

The tax was deemed to be temporary - how often we have heard that - and a

promise was made that it would not be imposed on books and the printed word, as these included bibles and other religious literature. All records however would bear the tax, whatever their content. This brought a furious page from Compton Mackenzie in The Gramophone for November 1940, referring to Sir Kingsley Wod as "an amiable and ensurient and harassed little man... committing a crime against art, while fancying that gramophone records consisted entirely of jazz and light entertainment". Mackenzie went on to accuse 'Sir Kingsley Wood and his Merry Men' of adding at least ten shillings to a Beethoven symphony, hence lowering the circulation by a third or more. His editorial made a good case against Purchase Tax on records, and a strong point of his argument was that records were now taxed but sheet music was not. Despite being a clever man, Compton Mackenzie disregarded the two reasons for imposing this tax, firstly as a raiser of much needed revenue and a reducer of spending power, and secondly as a conserver of raw material and manpower.

By its arrival, Purchase Tax caused the breaching of a closed and almost sacred area. The relationship of wholesale and retail prices had always been something closely guarded from the customer by middleman and shopkeeper, often by a system of letter or figure codes. Now with the new tax fixed as a percentage of the wholesale price, the amount of profit margin was open for all to see.

From October 1940 the standard range of records was affected in the following ways:

Some typical labels	Retail old price	Purchase Tax	Retail new price	Wholesale price therefore
Regal Zono/Rex	1s.6d.	4d.	1s. 10d.	1s.
Magenta 10"/ Decca F	2s.	5½d.	2s. 5½d.	1s. 4d.
Plum 10"	3s.	8d.	3s. 8d.	2s.
Plum 12"/Red 10" 4s.		10½d.	4s. 10½d.	2s.8d.
Red 12"/ Light Blue 12"	6s.	1s. 4d.	7s. 4d.	4s.

In a letter, Mr. (later Sir) Edward Lewis, founder of the Decca Record Co. Ltd. spoke up for the record trade, now acting as tax gatherers in addition to having to find extra capital against the tax on stock in trade. Moreover in compensation, retailers should be able to charge Purchase Tax on records on their shelves before the recent Budget. However the Chancellor had made it clear that tax had to be shown separately and distinctly from the retail price, both in advertising and on receipts. As time went on this separation became disregarded as the customer became reconciled to paying the tax.

There were many protests in the national press about the various results of the new tax that were considered unfair. It was levied for instance on soap and toothpaste, whereas there were still many luxury items untouched, but there were and still are few things more difficult to throw over than unpopular taxation, and the gramophone lobby never had much of a chance.

Purchase Tax helped to make things more inflationary for the record buyer in 1942 when some of the lower record prices were raised by a few coppers, but the trade suffered a further knock in the April Budget when the tax was advanced to 66½ per cent from the earlier 33½, and prices now stood as follows:

Labels - a few examples	New Retail Price
Regal Zonophone/Rex	2s. 10½d.
EMI magenta/Decca F series	3s. 7d.
EMI plum/dark blue 10" Decca M series/Brunswick O	4s. 8d.
EMI plum/dark blue 12" EMI red/light blue/Odeon 10"	5s. 9d.
EMI red/light blue/Odeon 12" Decca Polydor CA, T & X	8s. 7½d.

As the year passed record buyers must have held their breath as another Budget approached in April 1943, and their worst fears were confirmed. The Chancellor now levied 100 per cent Purchase Tax on gramophone records and the 'ten shilling record' was all but achieved. Retail prices were now as follows:

Regal Zonophone/Rex	3s. 4½d.
EMI magenta/Decca F series	4s. 2d.
EMI plum/dark blue 10" Decca M/Brunswick O	5s. 4½d.
EMI plum/dark blue 12" EMI red/light blue/Odeon 10"	6s. 7½d.
EMI red/light blue/Odeon 12" Decca Polydor CA, T & X	9s. 11d.

In spite of serious shortages and increased costs, it is remarkable that the two most expensive labels still remained at pre-war basic prices of 4s. and 6s. Not unexpectedly the new tax brought much pained protest. "No civilised nation would tax music 100 per cent", someone wrote, - but it did! Compton Mackenzie thought it 'inconsistent, illogical and indefensible.' There was much to say about the work of the British Council too, especially when it subsidised works that the record buyers disapproved of, and then expected the public to pay 100 per cent tax on the resulting discs.

Until April 1946, eleven months after the war ended in Europe, records still attracted the full tax rate, but in that month's Budget the new Attlee government reduced it to 33½ per cent and records once again cost somewhere near the post-October 1940 figures. The 'popular' labels were a little more, the 'red labels' precisely the same.

In the November of the following year, the government committed to big public spending, increased Purchase Tax on records to 50 per cent, and in the following April pushed it up again to 66½ per cent. By this time the record-buying community, weighed down with tax, could find little breath or energy to protest.

It would be tedious to describe the constant fluctuations that occurred until EMI  
106

allowed 78 records to fade from the catalogues in 1961. The Deccas had gone a little earlier. However, if a further price list may be offered, let it show how the nett prices of 78 records (that is, without Purchase Tax) fared from 1946, just after the end of the war, until 1958, shortly before their demise. For simplicity's sake, only the HMV range of EMI is quoted, but Columbia and Parlophone equivalents fared similarly.

Year of increase of Basic Price	Magenta BD	Plum B	Plum C	Red DA	Red DB
1946	2s. 6d.	3s. 3d.	4s.	4s.	6s.
1952	3s.	3s. 9d.	4s. 9d.	4s. 6d.	6s. 9d.
1956	4s.	5s.	6s. 4d.	6s.	8s. 11½d.
1957	5s.3d.	5s. 7d.	6s.7½d.	6s. 7½d.	9s. 5d.
1958	6s. 3½d.	6s. 3½d.	7s. 4d.	7s. 4d.	10. 5½d.

These increases seem mild to anyone who has seen everyday domestic prices double and redouble within very few years under inflation. A sign of the times was that by 1958 the price of the BD 'pop' series had come alongside the more up-market plum B series, giving point to an oft-heard remark of the day that 'the young have got the money'.

Finally here is an attempt to set out and de-code the Purchase Tax indicators that appeared on the 78 records of the years covered in this article. Without access to a record trade guide of those times, much of this has to be supposition:-

- 1) FREE OF PURCHASE TAX adhesive stamp  
for records already in dealers' stocks before October 21st 1940.
- 2) ST (? Single Tax) in a \$ monogram style on a green adhesive stamp.  
Probably the first style of tax indication before the embossing process. Used after October 21st 1940.
- 3) T embossed at record centre (? Taxed)  
Later found with D-T (?Double Tax), black-on-white adhesive stamp - also found as \$, the S being embossed over the T near the record centre. Date not determined
- 4) DT embossed at record centre (?Double Tax from April 1942)  
some found with D overstruck with X (? to cancel) and an extra T added (probably from April 1943)  
Some found with TT white adhesive stamp, in blue print with 2 pairs of horizontal lines (probably from April 1943)
- 5) TT embossed at record centre (?Triple Tax from April 1943)  
later found with first T overstruck with S (?from April 1946)
- 6) ST embossed at record centre (?Single Tax from April 1946)  
later found with L/T orange adhesive stamp (?50% tax from November 1947)
- 7) LT embossed at record centre (?50% tax from November 1947) later found with

DT 48 mauve adhesive stamp (? from April 1948)  
Later with LT overstruck with D, thus DT (? from April 1948)

The meanings of the following are unclear, and also several variants have been found:

- 8) RT embossed at record centre (? Reduced Tax)
- 9) NP printed on record label, believed peculiar to Decca products c. 1948-9
- 10) DTP embossed at record centre c. 1954  
later with N/T stamp added
- 11) N embossed at record centre. This appears to be the final style of tax indicator.

Sometimes a rubber stamp was used to indicate tax changes instead of paper stamps.

The EMI group embossed the tax symbols on the shellac by having the matrix or stampers punched, often over-punching as the rate was changed. Decca, who printed them on the label, may have had shorter print runs of labels. EMI, on the other hand, although changing to monochrome labels in 1940, still appeared to have large stocks of certain full-colour labels through much of the war period.

Any clarification or additions to these Purchase Tax symbols would be welcome for inclusion in this Journal.

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#### EDISON KINETOPHONE FILMS

Dear Christopher,

Interest has been expressed recently in this magazine on the subject of the sound films made by Edison from the 1890s to 1914. The earliest were, of course, exhibited in peep-show cabinet machines in amusement arcades, fairgrounds and public halls. A programme from the Crystal Palace dated February 14 1896 advertises 'Edison's latest novelty the Kinetophone. Combined action of music and life.' One of these machines, with a phonograph in the base of the cabinet, is preserved in the Science Museum. Wax cylinders provided musical accompaniment to films only fifty feet in length. In 1906 large wax cylinders were synchronised with projected films but much trouble arose from these sound tracks being so easily broken and worn. By 1912, ponderous phonographs playing very large celluloid cylinders of Blue Amberol type, by means of a mechanical amplifier designed by Daniel Higham in the Edison laboratories, were used. Each phonograph was linked mechanically with a projecting Kinetoscope and synchronisation was good enough for successful exhibition of excerpts from grand opera, Shakespeare plays and various other subjects.

The sound was stated to have been recorded up to thirty feet from the horn, and reproduced with considerable volume and clarity. Good results were achieved when Edison trained technicians were employed, but troubles occurred when picture palace staff were unaccustomed to such novel equipment. These films were distributed in Britain by Sir



## In Peter Dawson

We have been asked by the Peter Dawson Appreciation Society [REDACTED] if any members can supply the actual name of the cartoonist above. 'Maty' is obviously a nickname and the cartoon is very different in style from other Dawson cartoons by his friend Kerwin Maegraith. The original of the cartoon was framed and has hung for many years in a London publishers'.

## William Drury's Imperial Pictures.

At the Society's old meeting room in Curtain Road in the 1960s, I had a conversation with the late Reg. Bignall, the late Arthur Weatherly and Ossie Waite on this subject. They recalled these films at the Angel Theatre, Islington High Street, and elsewhere in the London district just before the Great War, particularly an extract from Berlioz's 'The Damnation of Faust' with very loud and clear but cavernous sound. In 1982 I had a further conversation, and correspondence, with Mr. Waite, who said that Mr. Bignall had told him that at the Grand Theatre in Bromley, Kent, he used to try to detect any flaw in the synchronisation but found none. Mr. Waite understands that Edison talking pictures were also shown at the cinema now known as the 'Talk of the Town', in Charing Cross Road. He once saw a list of these films, which included La Traviata and Il Trovatore.

I asked Bromley Reference Library to examine its archive material for reference to Edison films shown in Bromley, but nothing was found. Further search is needed in local newspapers.

Mr. Waite has asked for any members with similar recollections or other information to send notes for publication in this magazine. I must thank him and Miss Dorothy A. Brown of Streatham, formerly on the staff of Thomas A. Edison Ltd., London, for supplying some of the above information.

John Carreck

## HMV MODEL 31A

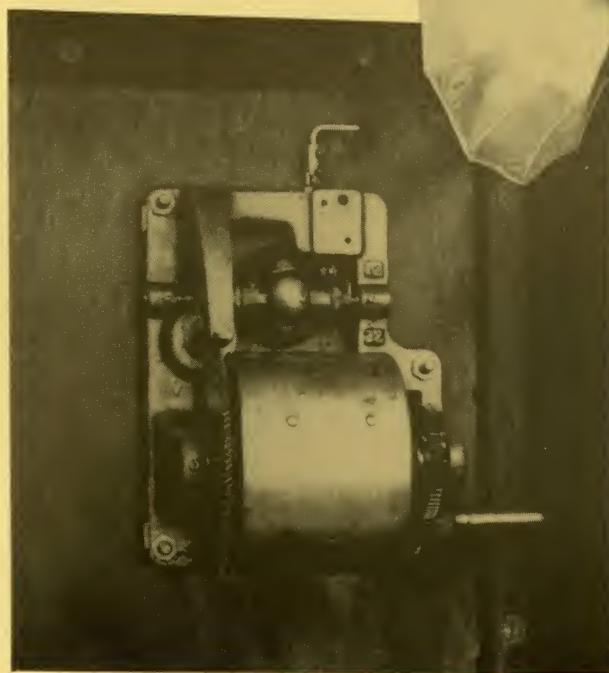
by Dave Roberts

The HMV Model 32 will be familiar to those who have read Christopher Proudfoot's book 'collecting Gramophones and Phonographs'. This horn machine was in the catalogue from 1927 to 1930, at a price of £9.00 in mahogany or £8.10s in oak, throughout that period.

A later gramophone of similar style has come my way and it is interesting to note some of the variations. The machine is given the number 31a\* for no obvious reason as it was issued after the 32, although it was aimed at the Asian market and never appeared in the English catalogues. The example I have was originally sold in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and sports a brass horn of the morning glory type. The fittings were originally chromium plated, and the soundbox is a 5b, with the fat tone-arm found on other 1930s models. Also like other models of the period it has a manual brake and a self-setting automatic brake operated by any run-out groove, familiar from all but the earliest 102 portables. The speed control is the variety found on all those double-spring HMVs which did not qualify for the speed indicator - medium price models like the 109, for example. (The 32 had a quadruple spring motor and a speed indicator).

The motor in the 31a is the normal HMV double-spring type (just to confuse the issue, this happens to be Motor No. 32 - Ed.) However, this one has the late governor in which the springs are held in place on lugs by circlips - cheaper to assemble than the traditional screws, and also familiar to those who have ever dismantled a 102.

\* The HMV numbering system was explained in HILLANDALE for April 1982. The 31 was a cheaper version of the 32, not an improved replacement for it, and the number is therefore quite logical. The 'a' = 'Mark'



His Master's Voice

Model 31a

with details of

the motor, brake

and speed control

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